

Genesis 12:1

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

Exodus 4:19-20

Now the LORD had said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who wanted to kill you are dead." So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt.

Matthew 4:18-20

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers; Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him.

Approximately 12 years ago a movie came out entitled *The Emperor's Club*. It is set in an exclusive boy's school in the Northeast. It revolves around a teacher who teaches ancient history to the boys. This teacher loves the ancients; his passion is sharing knowledge. He believes the great ideas that the greatest of the ancients shared, can shape one's character for the good. He has a plaque over the door in his classroom that he has each new class read aloud about a man named Shutruk Nahunte, dated from 1158 B.C. The plaque reads: "*I am Shutruk Nahunte, King Anshand of Susa, sovereign of the land of Elam. By command of Ishushinck I destroyed Sippar, took the stele of Niran-Sin, and brought it back to Elam, where I erected it as an offering to my god, Ishushinck.*" It tells how this man had his armies conquer and destroy another tribe and carted off their gods.

Then the teacher asks the boys, "Can anyone tell me anything about Shutruk Nahunte?" There was silence! "You may use your books." They begin to flip through them but then he adds, "You won't find him listed anywhere." "Why? Why is Shutruk Nahunte not in the history books?" The teacher goes on to answer his own question:

“Because great ambition and conquest without contribution is without significance.”

Then he raises the names of those who have contributed, Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, and Julius Caesar. Their busts and pictures are all around them in this classroom. These are men whose accomplishments are such that their accomplishments have outlasted their lifetimes. He then asks, “What will your contribution be, boys? How will history remember you?”

On a wall near the main entrance of the Alamo in San Antonio, Texas, is a portrait with the following inscription: “James Butler Bonham--no picture of him exists. This portrait is of his nephew, Major James Bonham, deceased, greatly resembled his uncle. It is placed here by the family that people may know the appearance of the man who died for freedom.” No literal portrait of Jesus exists either. But the likeness of the Son who makes us free can be seen in the lives of His true followers.

Jesus gave of Himself for everyone, not just a select few, not just for a certain people, not just for a certain country, but He gave of Himself for everyone. A couple of months ago I was afforded the privilege and honor to speak at the funeral of Ted Harris and speak of his contributions. He gave not just for his family, not just for Landrum, not just for Spartanburg Co., not just for South Carolina, but for everyone. ***“Great ambition and conquest without contribution is without significance.”***

Many of us attempt to give of ourselves each day and many times we falter. The one thing we need to remember is consistency. We must be consistent with our attempt to be followers of Christ. A brief, simple, but expressive eulogy was pronounced by Martin Luther upon a pastor at Zwickau concentration camp in 1522 named Nicholas Haussmann; Luther said, “What we preach, he lived.” What does your life reflect? When you have gone on to your reward and people think about you and your life, if they think about you what will they say? Would they have seen Christ's picture? ***“Great ambition and conquest without contribution is without significance.”***

Another movie I liked was, *A Few Good Men*. In it a U.S. Marine is killed and two fellow Marines are charged with murder and put on trial. As the trial progresses it takes several surprising turns until finally the Commander, of Quantanamo Bay Cuba, where the murder occurred, is sitting on the witness stand. He is being questioned about his role in this murder and the tension grows thick. Then anger flashes back and forth and finally the defense attorney yells at the Commander, "I want the truth!" To which the Commander yells back with vengeance, "You can't handle the truth!" Do we really want the truth? And if we find it, can we handle it?

Many times we come face to face with the truth and we believe we cannot handle it. I'm not the one; I don't know what to say; I'm not worthy to But God needs someone to tell the truth, to share that truth. God needs someone to speak from the divine perspective. God needs you. God needed people like Moses, Abraham, Isaiah, Peter, Paul, etc. all who could see from God's perspective and speak the truth. Hear this Good News; God wants the same thing from us.

Back to the movie *The Emperor's Club* I mentioned earlier, there is one troubled boy that this passionate teacher tries to help while he is his professor. He makes some headway but then the boy cheats during a major academic competition and after that seems to slip away from the teacher's influence and headed for failure.

Then the movie skips ahead twenty five years and this troubled teen has become quite successful in business and invites his old teacher to a reunion of sorts to re-do the competition and reclaim his honor. They restage the competition and shockingly the boy now turned man cheats again and once again the professor figures out that he has cheated. The teacher goes to the restroom to compose himself. The successful man follows him. The teacher confronts him and the man blatantly states that he doesn't care about truth or honor or loyalty or commitment or your precious ideas about contribution. I want what I want and I will do whatever I need to do to get it.

In the real world the only thing that matters is getting what you want, regardless of how it affects others. It is a stunning admission of guilt with no sense of remorse. The silence engulfs them until the latch

on a stall clinks, as it opens, and out walks the businessman's son. He has heard it all. He has heard his father's true values. The boy stares for just a moment and then turns and walks out of the room. His father has failed him. Without a sense of remorse or humility, without a sense of wrongdoing, without a sense of being a man of unclean lips, there is no hope for forgiveness between the father and the son or the father and his former teacher. He is left to live in a broken and isolated world of untruth. But it need not end that way.

If we are willing to enter into the presence of God, God can show us, show you the way, and the truth and the life. God will forgive you and empower you and lead you into a whole new world. Not only is God willing to do that, God wants to do that. God deeply desires to help us and guide us and forgive us and in fact needs us to experience that, so that others might hear from us that it is possible... so others can hear there is another way... there is a better way. In short, so the world might see and hear that there is hope, even in a time and place where truth seems scantily present. ***“Great ambition and conquest without contribution is without significance.”***

Many times people are willing to go and do but they want to dictate what they will do; where they will go. I know a man who goes on a mission trip every year to Central or South America. He goes there and works with a group for about two weeks, which includes time to sight see. But when I asked him about doing the same thing in the shadow of the cross of the church he attends, he says that's not for him. Someone else can do that, I'm not called to do that. I pushed the issue and said, "but these people here need help just like those in South and Central America." Besides you only work about a week total. He then asked me if I had any idea how much it costs to go there and do what he does.

I am not demeaning mission trips but I believe there is plenty for us to do here in the shadow of our cross we do not have to travel around the world. It looks great on a resume and it is great in conversation but the reality is God needs people willing to do this work and service right here at home. The problem is so many of us have to dictate what, where, and when we will go, and how long we will do. God called Abraham and he answered and left not knowing where he

was headed. Moses left a quiet life in a mountain area to go face off with the Pharaoh. The apostles left everything they knew and followed Jesus. My friend Jerry cleans restrooms at conferences and youth rallies; Georgejean sharpens pencils and puts offering envelopes out each week; Ms. Frances makes pound cakes for those sick and suffering and shut-in. These are people I know who make a vital contribution in the lives of many, every-day to those around them.

These and many others answered the call I spoke of last week and followed Jesus to do what needed to be done and said what needs to be said. They learned the truth and boldly went to live and spread God's truth. Going boldly does not mean going without fear, after all courage is not the lack of fear but acting in spite of it.

Finally, remember the words from Isaiah 6:8, "*Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?*" Who will speak from the divine perspective? Who is willing to represent God? Who is willing to represent God's truth and commitment, integrity and honor, loyalty and contribution? Who has the courage to step out into the fringes of

society and represent the vulnerable spreading the love of God? God wants the truth told! We need to decide who it is we are going to serve.

We need to decide how we are going to serve. Joshua 24:15 is clear *“choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”* Who will you serve?

Remember, God is not concerned about any of your abilities, just about your availability. Are you available to serve? Most importantly can you handle the truth? Can you handle sharing God's truth? Can you?